

ST. LOUIS CHAPTER
 BEREAVED PARENTS U.S.A.
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March • April 2010



St. Louis Chapter Newsletter

Bereaved Parents USA

March • April 2010

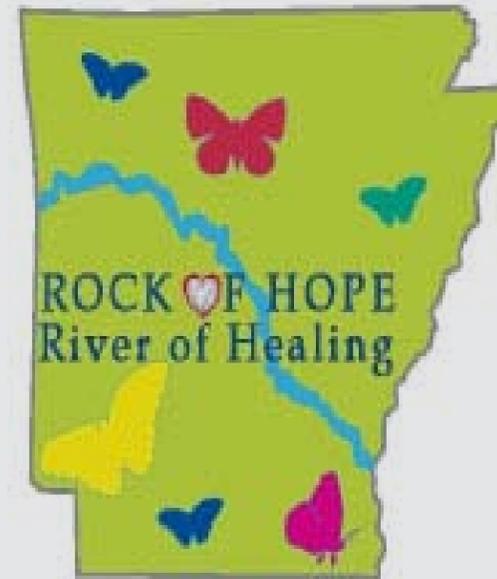
Bereaved Parents of the USA Credo

We are the parents whose children have died. We are the grandparents who have buried grandchildren. We are the siblings whose brothers and sisters no longer walk with us through life. We come together as BP/USA to provide a haven where all bereaved families can meet and share our grief journeys. We attend monthly gatherings whenever we can and for as long as we believe necessary. We share our fears, confusions, anger, guilt, frustrations, emptiness and feelings of hopelessness so that hope can be found anew. As we accept, support, comfort and encourage each other, we demonstrate to each other that survival is possible. Together we celebrate the lives of our children, share the joys and triumphs as well as the love that will

never fade. Together we learn how little it matters where we live, what our color or our affluence is or what faith we uphold as we confront the tragedies of our children's deaths. Together, strengthened by the bonds we forge at our gatherings, we offer what we have learned to each other and to every more recently bereaved family. We are the *Bereaved Parents of the USA*. We welcome you.



Bereaved Parents USA



2010 National Gathering "Rock of Hope, River of Healing"

Join us in the natural state of Arkansas
 July 9-11, 2010, Little Rock, AR
 Little Rock's Gathering Committee
 is hard at work.

Start making plans NOW!

*Be part of a
 unique time of
 inspiration and healing.*

GOLFING FOR OUR ANGELS 2009 REPORT



BPUSASTL doubled the amount of golfers supporting our Golf Tournament. BPUSASTL thanks

**Dr. Kent Snowden &
 Susie Gaffney, NP's**

Sponsorship of GFA 09.

With their support and your participation BPUSASTL raised over \$4000.00!

BPUSASTL's goal is for even more participation (golfers, sponsors & gift donations.)

If you are up to the healing challenge, then get involved for 2010 GFA.

Contact Greg Klokce at gklocke@att.net.

INSIDE: March • April

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EDUCATING MERNA

—Alice Wisler, Atlanta, GA

A few excruciating days after my four-year-old son Daniel died, I got a phone call from Merna, an elderly woman in our church. “Just think,” she said, “God needed another flower in his garden and he chose Daniel.”

I felt something sour in the pit of my stomach and my swollen eyes widened in disbelief. Too numb to say a word, I let her continue, telling me I'd be fine and to carry on with my life and family.

By the time I got off the phone, anger had risen within me. “God needed another flower!” a fellow-bereaved mother spat out when I conveyed my conversation with Merna. “Did you let this woman know how blasphemous that sounds? As though God is greedy and takes. That is not the nature of God.”

Little did I realize at that critical time during the early months of my bereavement journey that part of being bereaved is having to deal with those who want to console but are basically clueless. I've had to learn that I need to guide them in knowing what is appropriate and what is not. I've had to help those who want to comfort me understand just how to go about doing it. It's like having a broken leg and being called in to teach the doctor how to fix it. Isn't he supposed to know what to do? Likewise, aren't others supposed to know how to soothe the bereaved person's wounds and what to say and what not to say?

Occasionally a newly-bereaved parent, spouse or sibling may encounter a person who knows that saying, “I'm so sorry” is really about all that can be said. There is no magic formula of words that make the pain of grief go away.

But people still try. It seems that everyone has an answer to our pain. “Don't dwell on the death. Don't think about it,” many will say. However when they are faced with the agony of loss, suddenly their



advice does not work, not even for them. I've even heard psychologists and grief counselors say that the advice they'd once given was immensely lacking and did not work when they suffered their own loss.

My friend Jan's father died a few months ago. She has already planned not to attend church this Father's Day, her first one without her dad. I tell her this is understandable. Her mother and siblings don't agree with me. “Daddy would want you to go to church on Father's Day,” they insist. Jan feels it will be too painful to go to church on this day without him. Finally she tells her family, “I'll decide what to do when I wake up that morning.”

Grief is unique, as unique as the relationship we held with the loved one who has died. My middle-aged friend, Kathi, says people look at her funny when she breaks down in tears over the death of her aunt. “She was more than an aunt,” explains Kathi. “She was a mother to me.”

Many tell us that time heals our wounds. But then I turn to the words of fellow-bereaved parent, Henry Nouwen, and wonder if this is only another myth we've created. Nouwen writes: “Real grief is not healed by time... If time does anything, it deepens our grief. The longer we live, the more fully we become aware of who he/she was for us, and the more intimately we experience what their love meant to us. Real, deep love is, as you know, very unobtrusive, seemingly easy and obvious, and so present that we take it for granted. Therefore, it is often only in retrospect – or better, in memory – that we can fully realize its power and depth. Yes, indeed, love often makes itself visible in pain.” ▶

Meeting Times & Places

ARNOLD-IMPERIAL

Please see So. County
Fenton Group

BOWLING GREEN

(3rd Thursday, 7-9 PM)
Prairie Edge Garden Center,
18011 Business 161 S.
Bowling Green, MO 63334
Fac: Cindy Morris (636)462-9961
Bowling Green's SIBLING GROUP
(Meet time same as Bowling Green)
Fac: Wendy Koch (573)822-6123

TROY, MO Group

(2nd Tuesday, 7 PM)
Ingersoll Chapel in Troy
Fac: Cindy Morris (636)462-9961
Troy's SIBLING GROUP
(Meets same time as Troy)

ST. PETERS

(1st Thursday, 7:00 PM)
Knights of Columbus Hall
5701 Hwy N, Cottleville MO
Fac: Cindy Morris (636)462-9961
Greg Klocke 636-441-5304
St. Peters' SIBLING GROUP
(Meets same time as St Peters)

Tri-County Chapter

(2nd Thursday)
First Baptist Church
402 North Missouri St
Potosi, MO 63664
Fac: Brenda Wilson (573)438-4559

JEFFERSON COUNTY, SOUTH

(1st Thursday, 7 PM)
St Rose Catholic Church,
Miller & 3rd St
Desoto, MO
Facs: Ginny Kamp (636)586-8559
Co: Debbie Larson

SOUTH COUNTY Fenton

(2nd & 4th Monday, 7 PM)
Abiding Savior Lutheran Church
4355 Butler Hill Rd.
St. Louis, Mo 63128
Fac: Kathy Myers (636)343-5262
Co: Darla McGuire (636)671-0916

WASHINGTON MO Group

Please see
BPUSA StL bulletin board
www.bpustl.org

NORTH COUNTY Group

(3rd Saturday, 9:30 AM)
Coldwell Baker
Gundaker Bldg (rear)
2402 North Hwy 67
Fac: Pat Ryan (314)605-3949
69 Volunteer interpreter for
hearing impaired, call ahead!

WEST COUNTY Group

(4th Tues, 7 PM)
Shaare Emeth Congregation,
11645 Ladue (Ballas & Ladue)
MO 63141
Fac: Judy Ruby (314)994-1996

Newsletter Submissions

Cut off date for May • June issue
is April 10th
Send your submission to:
Jamie Ryan
6309 Washington Ave
St. Louis, MO 63130
Include a self addressed stamped
envelope
please make checks payable to
BPUSA Thankyou!

BPUSA St L Chapter's

Business Meeting: March 13
Facilitators Meet: April 10

Saturdays @ 9:00 AM
Creve Coeur Gov't Center
Room #1

300 N. New Ballas Road

All interested in how
our chapter operates are
welcome! **Questions?**

Call: Sharon Krejci
(636) 532-0033



ADDITIONAL MEETINGS

Parents of Murdered Children:

Meetings: 3rd Tues 7:30 p.m.
St Alexius Hospital
3933 S Broadway
Mata Weber (618) 972-0429
Butch Hartmann
(314) 487-8989

LIFE CRISIS CENTER:

(Survivors of Suicide)
2650 Olive St,
St. Louis, MO 63103
Meetings: Weds 7:00 p.m.
(314) 647-3100
P.A.L.S. (Parents affected by
the loss of a child by suicide)
Meetings: 4th Sat at
10:30 a.m.
St Lukes Hospital (141 & 40)
St. Louis, MO
(314) 853-7925

From My Heart To Yours

— Cathy Heider, TCF, N. Central Iowa Chapter

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You named your child at birth, never realizing how precious the sound of your child's name would become to you. Have you heard your child's name recently? Has anyone said your child's name lately? Have you stopped thinking about your child at all? Do you feel as though others have forgotten your child, now that your child is not on this earth?

Whether it is a month since your child's death, or a year, or even ten years, you will never forget your child. You will never want others to forget your child. You will never grow tired of hearing someone mention your child's name to you. It is like music to your ears when someone else remembers. Because you, you never forget. There will be times when certain others will want you to forget about your child. They will grow weary of listening to you and to your story. They will think you need to move on from the memory of your child, all while telling you about their living children and all that is going on in their lives. But they do not know. They do not know about death and grief and emptiness and a lifelong



aching that will accompany the death of your child.

They will not understand that you must tell your story over and over again, so that you purge some of the anguish and the pain of your loss out of your body. They will not feel comfortable when you tell them how you cry yet, even to this day, about your child. And you will learn quickly to whom you can speak of your child, those who will not turn away, or change the subject.

You will learn to not speak of your child around certain people, and, with all the sadness that goes with grief and the loss of your precious child, there comes another sorrow with the knowledge that some people will not want to hear about your child, they do not want to hear your child's name.

So, speak of your child, and forget about those who do not want you to remember. Forget about your child? Never! Talk about your child, remember your child and say their name over and over again. It is music to your ears. ■

*Grief is healing; to take away our grief
is to take away our healing.*

*And learning about life after death helps us heal
with greater hope, comfort and peace."*

—Bob Olson

► I've lost contact with Merna over these five years. But since then I have had plenty of her types enter my life. One changed the subject when I told her about losing Daniel. Being the stubborn person I am, I gently brought the conversation back to him. I liked this woman, a co-worker of my husband's, and was certain she could do better about handling my grief than changing the topic to her pet dog. I continued to talk about Daniel and how it is without him. She was touched by the things I do in his memory. By the end of our talk, she was asking questions about what he had been like. There were tears in her eyes. I felt I had given her permission to show her empathetic side. Yes, I'm all for educating the Mernas of our society. I even hope that someone, somewhere has been educating her. Perhaps she'll call one day and ask how I am. And when the topic comes to Daniel, maybe she will let me talk about how much I miss living without my blond-haired, blue-eyed son. I can always hope. ■

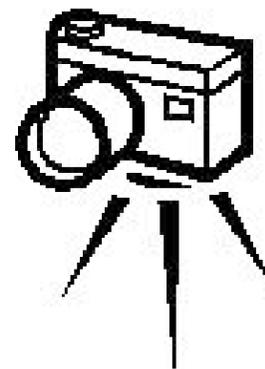
PICTURES DIFFERENT STYLES OF GRIEF

—Mary Cleckley

(Past member of board of directors of both tcf and bpusa)

Are you a picture person?

Some are, and some aren't. Maybe it is something you hadn't even thought about - until an important person in your life died. It is then that pictures of the deceased take on added importance, and it can be of a positive or negative nature.



I realized after my son died that I am not a picture person; but, after I thought about it, I never was. Maybe your family, like mine, had one member who turned out to be the official picture taker. Any occasion that documents my family's history is one where the designated member was always present. Otherwise, we would not have a pictorial history to look back on.

My oldest sister, whose only child died as a result of an accident just 3 months after my son died, was the one so designated in our family. As a result, she has many pictures of us all. She has found great comfort in having countless pictures of her son on display. There were a dozen or so of them on her den walls the last time I was in her home.

But, what of those of us who find no comfort - just pain - in having pictures of the person who died around? If you realize that my sister and I have such differing needs, how about spouses who occupy the same household? Do you know, or have you even asked, how your spouse reacts to the pictures of your child who died?

When you're under great stress, sometimes seemingly little things gnaw at the roots of a marriage. Survival often requires flexibility and sensitivity. It doesn't require major changes to meet both needs. It just requires a little cooperation.

A suggestion is that, if the spouse who finds the pictures comforting can designate a spot in the house where pictures will be displayed, the other spouse, knowing where they are, doesn't have to see them unless he or she wants to. It is important to recognize that not wanting to see the pictures doesn't mean that the spouse does not care. It just means, as is true with most couples, that signs of grieving differ.

"...recognize that not wanting to see the pictures doesn't mean that the spouse does not care."

It is hoped that you have both made efforts not to make the pain of the loss of a child worse. Lord knows, grief is bad enough at its best, and needs no help in making lives miserable. Noting and not blaming the differences in styles of grieving, can be the beginning of understanding for both of you. That is what the survival of a marriage is all about. ■

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Margaret's CORNER

By Margaret Gerner, MSW

A SPRING: HOPE OR MORE PAIN?

Here it comes! Spring! Flowers blooming, weather warming, the cold of winter is behind us. We're coming up out of our pain, right? Wrong! My six-year-old son Arthur was killed by an automobile on Friday, May 28, 1971. The Easter before was the last time we were together as a complete family.

For years after, spring and especially the Easter season began the realization that we were no longer a complete family, and never would be again. Each year brought a new year of pain.

When the first spring came after Arthur was killed, I thought I would be better. Buds popped out and my sadness was deeper. Easter came, and my pain was no less. The temperature rose, but the coldness in my heart never left. Many more springs came—and none of them brought the relief I prayed for. For me, the hope and renewal that was supposed to be a part of spring was a lie.

Ironically, though, the beginning of the resolution of my grief began in the spring of 1978. My grief, which by this time had become prolonged and distorted, created a number of other problems in my life. Among them, was the deterioration of my marriage. We began seeing a marriage counselor. I couldn't believe it when he told me that it was not only acceptable, but necessary to face Arthur's death and talk about the pain and emotions I had been encouraged to suppress all these years. Mine is a long story of struggle and determination, of steps and missteps, and pain and sadness and loss. But it is also a long story of change and growth.

The beginning of the resolution of my grief may have started then, but it didn't all happen in spring. It took place over many seasons. Various seasons are significant for all of us. The Christmas holidays may be significant for you. The middle of June for someone else. A colorful fall may be significant for another. But, for some reason, we are led to believe that spring will bring a lessening of our pain. This is not true. Spring is simply a time of year. It's a date. It's a season. It's symbolic.

But, spring is not magic. Yes, it holds promises, but those promises are only brought to fruition when we work at them. Spring can be the impetus for change. The changes that take place in early grief, we hardly see spring come. We are so immersed in our pain and Desolation that it is hard to see anything. Just as winter comes before spring, dark painful grief work comes before we begin to see the light of comfortable life again.

Don't expect to sidestep the healthy, albeit painful, normal, and long process of grief.

Don't endow a Season with magic to make changes in you.

Hard grief work is what will get you to the other side of your child's death, not a date on the calendar. ■

A FOREVER BABY

—Elena Baker TCF, Pottstown, PA

At quiet times, when there is just me, I find myself dreaming and planning for the 3 of us. Then I am brought back to reality, and realize that for now there are just 2 of us. I wonder what I am to do with all the hopes, plans, and dreams I had for you, for the family we would have been.

I wonder about you. I try to picture you in my mind. When I do, my eyes sting, my throat gets tight, and I know all I want is to have and hold you. Then I am brought back to reality, and realize now I can only hold you in my mind and heart.

I have many feelings inside. Some I share, others I hide, but they are mine. They are okay. They are about you. At times I wonder why, instead of being a baby in our lives and the world, you were chosen to be a forever baby in a life and world of eternity. It is hard for me to understand why. In fact, I don't.

At times life seems difficult and even unfair, and pulling through seems like an impossible task. But when we do, our sense of accomplishment is great. It gives us hope and courage to go on with life. I am finding hope, courage, and strength in God to carry on and to try to handle whatever lies ahead. I will never forget the precious and powerful way you entered and left my life in only a moment of time. I love you even though you could not stay. ■

Infant & Toddler

Page

I REMEMBER...

...driving to the hospital, saying, "No, it can't be true, it must be a mistake."
 ...hugging my wife, as the nurse left the room.
 ...going through the labor experience, and knowing our outcome.
 ...seeing our baby's head emerge.

How I had longed for this moment.

...how I cried, as our baby was stillborn
 ...the silence in the birthing room.
 ...holding and kissing her.
 ...debating whether to "save" or give her the name we had planned.
 ...deciding to give her the name that was rightfully hers.
 ...how hard it was leaving the hospital, empty-handed and broken-hearted.

... coming home without our prize .
 ...how empty and lonely our home felt.
 ...both of us holding each other and crying.
 ...needing the pastor at this time, and feeling bad about not attending church.

...asking God "WHY?" (and still do).
 ...how hard it was to see my wife go through all the hormonal changes.
 ...Nature's cruelty: her body did not know there would be no baby to nurse .
 ...feeling so helpless when my wife cried.
 ...going to work and no one asking, "How are you?"
 ...feeling so mad at the world.

...the warm support from our counselor.
 ... how emotional the support group meetings were
 ...all the anniversaries.
 ...Alexandra's first birthday, and how we acknowledged it at the cemetery.
 ...the balloon release on her first birthday. I remember ...

...*Daddy's little girl.* ■



Bereaved Parents USA

cont. from p 11 ▶ "You don't know," I answered, "and neither do I, but unless you see something obviously dangerous, they are dealing with it in their own way at their own speed and you may not be a part of their grieving."

I now have a different outlook on life. It is precious. I feel that in my new life I am closer to my parents. Each one of us has to live our lives 113 better in Mark's memory. I value my friends and time more. I can handle stress much better. Just think of the alternative. I have become a better person by helping others. I like the new person I have become. I would trade it all in a second! ■

One of These Days

—Mary Lizzi Carlstedt Sandusky, Ohio

One of these days you will realize you got through the day without crying.

One of these days you will bite into a piece of fruit and actually taste the sweetness.

One of these days you will find yourself smiling.

One of these days you will recognize again that stranger in the mirror.

One of these days you will notice that the season has changed.

One of these days you will feel the sun on your face.

One of these days you will laugh out loud.

One of these days you will wake and not dread the day ahead.

One of these days you will speak their name and smile.

One of these days you will come to terms that for all your questions there are no answers.

One of these days, when you are ready, you will know you'll be okay, not whole ever again, but okay, one of these days . . .



Telephone Friends

Accident, Automobile:

Katie VerHagen (314) 576-5018
Steve Welch (636) 561-2438

Accident, Non Vehicular:

Maureen & Chuck McDermott (636) 227-6931

Adult Sibling:

Mark VerHagen (314) 726-5300
Traci Morlock (636) 332-1311

Drugs or Alcohol:

Patrick Dodd (314) 575-4178

Grandparent:

Margaret Gerner (636) 978-2368

Child with Disability:

Lois Brockmeyer (314) 843-8391

Illness, Short Term:

Jean & Art Taylor (314) 725-2412

Illinois Contact:

Linda Moffatt (618) 243-6558

Jefferson County Contact:

Sandy Brungardt (314) 954-2410

Murder:

Mata Weber (618) 972-0429
Butch Hartmann (314) 487-8989

Only Child:

Mary Murphy (314) 822-7448

Suicide:

Sandy Curran (314) 647-2863

Single Parent:

Mary Murphy (314) 822-7448

"Bereavement is the deepest initiation into the mysteries of human life, an initiation more searching and profound than even happy love."

—William Ralph Inge

St. Louis Bulletin Board

BPUSA St L Washington Co Support Group

Offers 4 sessions:

"GRIEVING THE DEATH OF MY CHILD: A JOURNEY OF PAIN AND HOPE"

Why:

Sessions focus on understanding your grief journey, and sharing with other bereaved parents.

Where:

The First Baptist Church
111 E. 14th Street
Washington, MO

When

7:00 p.m.

Feb. 2: Remembering our Child

Feb 16: The Symptoms of Grief

Mar 2: How Long Will It Last?

Mar 16: Investing In Life

These sessions are FREE.

How:

To register or for more information,

please call 239-6098.

(Registration is encouraged to allow for adequate Materials.)

Book & Movie Review

—submitted by Lisa Nechvoglod

An extract from a book called **"The Lovely Bones"** by Alice Sebold.

"These were the lovely bones that had grown around my absence: the connections- sometimes tenuous, sometimes made at a great cost, but often magnificent - that happened after I was gone. And I began to see things in a way that let me hold the

world without me in it. The events that my death wrought were merely the bones of a body that became whole at some unpredictable time in the future. The price of what I became to see as this miraculous body had been my life."

It is a very beautiful and meaningful quote. The book is also beautiful. It is about a young girl (Suzie) who is murdered when

she is 13. She watches her family from her heaven and experiences their journey through grief and acceptance of her death with them.

Eventually Suzie sees that her family, although greatly changed by her death, has come to accept that she is gone, she moves to another level of heaven and it is from here in the book that this quote is lifted. ■

WWW

Be a...Web Sponsor for a \$20 donation to BPUSA/STL your child will be featured on our home page for 1 month. Includes a scrolling message and your child's picture (25 words or fewer).

Create a...Web Memorial at the

"Meet Our Children" section. The cost is a \$25 donation. Your child's name will appear below your group as a link to their page.

Interested, contact: Barb Blanton at our website or barb_blanton@yahoo.com. With your donation, specify whether you want to sponsor or to add to the web memorial.



All Aboard!

Newsletter is going green & digital!
Please send

Sharon,
skrejci@swbell.net
your email address.

STUDY SHOWS HOW STRESS CAUSES ILLNESS

By Justine Blau (AP)

It's no surprise that constant stress can make people sick, and now a team of researchers has figured out how. A study focused on 119 men and women taking care of spouses with dementia. The health of the caregivers was compared with that of 106 people of similar ages not living under the stress of constant care giving.

Blood tests showed that a chemical called Interleukin-6 [IL-6] sharply increased in the blood of the stressed caregivers compared with blood of the others in the test. Previous studies have associated IL-6 with several diseases, including heart disease, arthritis, osteoporosis, type-2 diabetes and certain cancers. The study also found the increase in IL-6 can linger in caregivers for as long as three years after a caregiver had ceased that role because of the spouse's death. Of the test group, 78 spouses died during the survey.

"This really makes a link to why chronic stress can actually kill people," said Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, professor of psychology and psychiatry at Ohio State University. "We haven't had a good mechanism before."

She explained that people under stress tend to respond by doing things that can increase their levels of IL-6. For example, they may smoke or overeat; smoking raises IL-6 levels, and the chemical is secreted by fat cells.

"Stressed people also may not get enough exercise or sleep", she added. "Exercise reduces IL-6 and normal sleep helps regulate levels of the chemical. It clearly points to the need to control stress better."

The findings by the research group/headed by Kiecolt-Glaser and her husband, Ronald Glaser, a professor of molecular; immunology and medical genetics at Ohio State/ appear in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. ■

Lovingly lifted from the BP/USA Tampa Bay Chapter Newsletter, who lovingly lifted it from the BP/USA Mid Hudson NY Newsletter



DEALING WITH GRIEF: SIBLING'S VIEWPOINT

—Rick Edler TCF, LA/South Bay, CA

Two things happened to me on January 11, 1992. I lost my brother to death, and I lost my parents to grief. My dad, the one who seemed to always have the answer to my questions, the "rock" in the family, the one whose job was to fix everything, completely lost it. The fear, anger, and shock in his eyes when told that my brother had died are engraved into my memory. He fell limp in the arms of my mother and me in the emergency room at UCLA medical center. This was the first time I had ever seen my parents lose control. At that moment our roles switched.

"I'll take them," I said to the nurse as she handed me a bag labeled "EDLER." It was the personal belongings of my brother. I quietly took them and placed them in my car. For the next three months, I seemed to make many of the decisions. It was not a courageous leader rising up to the occasion. I was the least common denominator. My parents, although they tried, could not help me. They were trying to deal with the tremendous grief themselves.

For this reason, I put off dealing with Mark's death for many months. I cried and felt sad, but never addressed the issue. My friends were concerned and asked how I was doing. But no one, unless you have been there, really wants to hear the true answers. Mark was the only other person in the world who was a combination of my mom and dad. My friends could not relate nor would I want them to. I would never wish this upon anyone. But this left me alone to deal with it and I chose to put it off.

After three months I met a gentleman at a family retreat with a group of which my dad was a part. Kevin had lost his brother to suicide about nine months earlier. He was farther along in his "coping" than I was. I could talk to him about Mark, mention Mark's name and share stories without making the whole room uncomfortable about the subject.

I saw someone who was dealing with it and it gave

Sibling Page

me hope. There is a certain vocabulary that you learn after going through this that no book, no story, and no amount of explanation can do justice. I don't talk about certain things with my friends because I do not have the time or energy to explain (or try to explain) the many feelings I am having. Kevin understood. He had the vocabulary. This was the first step into healing. I came to grips with the reality of my new life—different than the one before, but there was no going back. At this point, I went on autopilot. I remember many events of the three years following the death. My girlfriend and I broke up. My parents changed houses. I went through the many firsts, but just kept moving forward. I was not depressed, however. My lows were not very low. But my highs were not very high.

I became involved with The Compassionate Friends sibling group of our local chapter in the third year. I did it half out of responsibility to my parents and half out of the knowledge that if I was running the meeting, then I was in control of how much sharing I needed to put into it. Kind of a control thing. To my surprise the meetings have become so beneficial to my healing that I am surprised at myself. By sharing with others, I feel that I help them and in turn myself. Many feelings, thoughts, or emotions that I may have thought were just mine, I have found are universal with others. After three years I began to come "out of the valley." I can only say that by looking back. Hindsight has allowed me to see my steps of healing. I stepped into the role of being strong for our family because I felt that was best. Many others I have talked to mention a similar reaction. Your parents are barely able to deal with their own grief. The last thing you want to do is bring more pain on them, so, you don't share with your parents.

Last July at The Compassionate Friends conference, many parents walked up to me and asked, "How do I know if my son (daughter) is dealing with this? I am concerned since they do not tell me anything." ▶

LESSONS

—Pat Moser Joey Starling's mother
Marion County FL Chapter BP/
USA

Since the death of my beloved son, Joey, I have learned many lessons. Lessons that were not my choice to learn. I have learned what it means to go from a happy, carefree family of five to a grieving heartbroken family of four. I have learned that grief hurts like no pain I have ever experienced before.

I have learned the unbelievable pain involved in arranging a funeral and burying my son. I have learned that the death of a child takes its toll on the entire family. I have learned that the general public who have never experienced such pain have many cures and "shoulds" for a grieving mother.

I have learned what it means to try to go on with life, taking one step forward and two steps backwards. I have learned what it means to be so consumed with pain and grief that you feel like you are going crazy.

I have learned that the sun dared to come up the very day after my son died and continues to do so daily. I have learned that the world did not stop for everyone when my son died like it did for me.

I have learned the pain of getting two Mother's Day cards instead of three. I have learned that Christmas and other

family days are not much fun anymore. I have learned the pain involved in seeing my son's friends marry and have babies. I have learned that life is not fair and that bad things do happen to good people.

Yes, I have learned so many painful lessons of life, just as each of you have. But in the years since my Joey died I have also learned...

That I can and must go on with my life. That going on with life and laughter does not mean I have forgotten my son or love him any less. Going on with life is just what my son would want for me and my family.

I have learned that I have the best husband in the world that supported and held me through my many long days, weeks,



months and years of grief and continues to do so today.

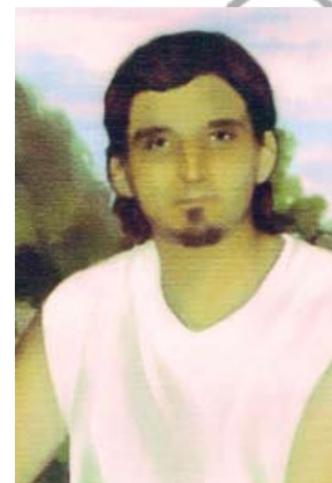
I have learned that I still have two precious daughters I love dearly, that need and are entitled to a mother. I have learned how very lucky I am to have three beautiful grandchildren who mean the world to me that I want to

remember me as a happy funny granny/nana and not one who cries all the time.

I have learned that God did not take my son; instead God is there now to take care of him. I have learned that even though this is not the way I choose my life to be, this is the way my life is and I must try to make the best of it. I have learned to take one day at a time and try to make it the best day possible for myself and my family. We have no guarantees of what tomorrow brings. I have learned that I did not lose my son, he is with me in my heart all of the time.

I have learned that although Christmas and other family days will never be the same again, there can be happiness and excitement in them again. I have learned to be a more compassionate person. I have learned that by reaching out to help other hurting bereaved parents, I am in turn helping myself. I have learned how very much each of my bereaved parent friends means to me and I feel they are a special gift from my son.

I wish so very much that I could magically and very quickly bring all you newly bereaved parents down the long hard road of grief that I have traveled and you too must travel. I can not do that but I hope that as much as you can not possibly believe it today in your early all consuming grief, that I can give you hope that your life too will be good again one day. ■



In Memory of
Lawrence W. Jeffries
September 19, 1963– July 5, 2007
Love, Mom
—Evelyn Ransom



In Memory of
Arran Ragon
November 26, 1985– March 1, 2007
Love you forever,
Mom, Dad, Kavin, Keith, Wendy,
Carissa, Tyler, Kaleb & Ragon
—Bill & Kaye Ragon



In Memory of
Sharon Rene
Przybylski
—Joseph Przybylski



In Memory of
Joseph DeMarco
We love you,
Mom, Dad & Jen
—Theresa & John DeMarco

In Memory of
Bob Curran
—Jamie Ryan & David Whitemanhn

What Is A Love Gift?

It is a donation made in your child's memory to **BP/USA**. We are self-supporting organization. Our St Louis Chapter runs entirely with volunteer staffers. For that reason fund raising efforts and donations like "Love Gifts" and "Golfing for Angels" pay all our expenses.

If you 'd like to have your child's photo printed and **BP/USA StL** doesn't have a picture on file please send a photo along with a self addressed stamped envelope to:
Jamie Ryan, 6309 Washington Ave, St Louis, MO 63130
—Thank you!

Say Olin to Say Good-Bye

The time of concern is over. No longer are we asked how we are doing. Never are the names of our children mentioned to us. A curtain descends. The moment has passed. Lives slip from frequent recall. There are exceptions: close and compassionate friends, sensitive and loving family. For most, the drama is over. The spotlight is off. Applause is silent. But for us the play will never end.

The effects on us are timeless. Say their names to us. On the stage of our lives they have been both lead and supporting actors. Do not tiptoe around the greatest event of our lives. Love does not die. Their names are written on our lives. The sounds of their voices replay within our minds. You feel they are dead. We feel they are of the dead and still they live. They ghostwalk our souls, beckoning in future welcome. You say they were our children. We say they are. Say their names to us and say their names again. It hurts to bury their memory in silence. What they were in flesh lies buried miles away. What they are in spirit stirs within us always. They are of our past, but they are part of our now. They are our hope for the future. You say not to remind us. How little you understand we cannot forget. We would not if we could. We understand you, but feel pain in being forced to do so. We forgive you, because you cannot know. And we would forgive you anyway. We accept how you see us, but understand that you see us not at all.

We strive not to judge you, for yesterday we were like you. We love you, will make no expectations toward you. But we wish you could understand that we dwell both in flesh and in spirit. The mystery is that you do too, but know it not. We do not ask you to walk this road. The ascent is steep and the burden heavy. We walk it not by choice. We would rather walk with them in flesh, looking not to spirit roads beyond.

We are what we have to be. What we have lost you cannot feel. What we have gained you cannot see. And we would not have you. Say their names, for they are alive in us. They and we will meet again, though in many ways we have never parted. They and their lives play light songs on our minds, sunrises and sunsets on our dreams. They are real and shadow, were and are. Say their names to us and say their names again. They are our children and we love them as we always did. Say Their Names!. **PLEASE, SAY THEIR NAMES.** ■

“Never does one feel oneself so utterly helpless as in trying to speak comfort for great bereavement.”

—Jane Welsh Carlyle

BPUSA *StL's commitment is to provide space in our newsletter for our parents and families to communicate. Printed in your newsletter are private expressions of writers. We offer the writings for your reflection. Sometimes observing nature or establishing routines signal solace to the writer. Often writers turn to religion or spirituality for comfort and guidance.*

BPUSA *StL shares these insights not only for your contemplation but also to acknowledge our community's many, rich sources for strength and hope.*

NOT a Matter of Choice

—Carol Loeher, Heart of Florida Chapter

Our son Keith was 29 years old when he decided to end his life by suicide in 1999. Suicide is a frightening word, and it is not only ignorance but fear and stigma that keep people from understanding why someone would take their own life. In a way, it is easier to think that a person made a “choice”, freeing us from knowing the truth.

The word “choice” continues to perpetuate the stigma of suicide. The definition “choice” is “the freedom in choosing, both in the way one chooses and in the number of possibilities from which to choose.” In a pre-suicidal state, an individual is overwhelmed in a given situation. They suffer extreme mental anguish and a painful sense of hopelessness. Their sense of judgment is distorted, and they do not have the ability to make “choices” or options.

They usually want to kill the pain rather than themselves. Suicidal people may be unable to restrain themselves from acting on feelings or impulses. This strong impulse to end the pain is often due to the depletion of the chemical called serotonin. Serotonin is a chemical within the brain that helps restrain impulsive behavior.

“There is no suffering greater than that which drives people to suicide. Suicide defines the moment in which mental pain exceeds the human capacity to bear it. It represents the abandonment of hope,” says John T. Maltzberger, M.D., past president of the American Association of Suicidology, practicing psychiatrist and teacher at Harvard Medical School.

Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death in the USA and the second leading cause of death for those ages 25-34. About 30,000 of the 650,000 Americans who attempt suicide each year die. Suicide is almost always the result of depression, an illness of the brain.

We can only imagine the horrible mental torture our son Keith endured. Depression is one of the most terrible and pervasive illnesses of our day. In 1999, the Surgeon General of the United States listed suicide as a national public crisis. Having accurate information about depression is critical.

We live in a world where people hang onto old stereotypes. In order to stop future loss of lives by suicide, we must make certain to take advantage of any opportunity to encourage greater awareness. In that goal, we can make great strides to ensure that these stereotypes cease to persist. ■

“Life Does Not End; it Changes”

